

# FRANKLIN SANDS, STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT 98



POSTAGE

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## 2010 Session Update

Dear Neighbors,

Representing your interests in the Florida House of Representatives continues to be a welcomed challenge and a rewarding privilege. I appreciate your vote of confidence and I enjoy serving House District 98.

As many of you know, while much of the country is recovering from the recession, Florida continues to face many additional economic challenges. Therefore, during the 2010 legislative session, my colleagues and I focused much of our attention on economic development and job creation. In addition, we confronted a number of issues important to District 98.

As Democratic Leader in the Florida House of Representatives, I was given an opportunity to work on a multitude of issues facing Broward County and our entire state.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in Tallahassee. I hope you find this legislative update to be a useful source of information on the 2010 session. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the issues, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Respectfully,

Franklin Sands



Throughout the legislative session, I supported policies to promote the development of renewable energy resources and the jobs that will be created in this growing economic sector. And to encourage development of new markets for sustainable and renewable energy, I supported smart investments in important public works projects in communities throughout the state.

But given Florida's budgetary crisis, the Legislature had to be prudent and resourceful. That's why I backed a bipartisan effort to make clean energy technology accessible to homeowners and businesses. Property Assessed Clean

Energy (PACE) financing, which is the focus of HB 7179, provides local governments the flexibility to create programs to lend funds that homeowners or businesses can use to pay for improvements such as solar panels, high-efficiency water heaters, and storm hardening for their homes. The loans can be repaid over time depending on the amount and specific terms of the loan and can also be repaid as part of a participating homeowner's property tax bill. The low interest loans are acquired at the local government level and it is a twenty year program.

The people's trust is violated too often through abuse and corruption by elected officials and other public servants. I believe improvements are needed to ensure that state laws and budgets are written in a democratic manner that is consistent with Florida's government-in-the-sunshine traditions.

During the 2010 session, the Legislature considered several important measures to combat public corruption, including a bill to allow for the prosecution of public servants – elected and appointed – who purposefully fail to disclose a financial interest or a future financial benefit. While there is no magic bullet that guarantees government is honest and accountable, a few steps were taken during the 2010 session to expand the arsenal available to the front line prosecutors and investigators fighting those who breach the public's trust.

I wish even more had been accomplished to improve the public's access to state government. And more could have been done this session to restore voter confidence, close loopholes in the elections statutes and protect voters' rights.



I was proud this session to support new policies to promote the recovery of our state's economy. For me, job creation for Floridians was job number ONE! It was important for me to meet the expectations of Florida's families and businesses who asked the Legislature to encourage new businesses, promote job creation and remove barriers to economic growth.

I supported legislation to keep Floridians working, prevent layoffs and to bring a measure of economic stability. For instance, we passed a bill on the first day of session to hold down a dramatic increase in unemployment tax rates for businesses for the next two years. I believe these increases would have resulted in layoffs for Floridians.

The Legislature also passed a \$200 million jobs package (over 3 years) that is designed to make Florida more economically competitive and to encourage companies to invest in our state and hire Floridians.



Throughout the session, I supported various efforts that help Florida consumers, including a reinstatement of Florida's back-to-school sales tax holiday that benefits Florida's families. The tax holiday provides a three-day sales tax holiday for clothing and other school supplies purchased from August 13-15, 2010. This tax relief measure will help spur growth in our vital retail economy. This year's back-to-school tax holiday is expanded to include, among other items, pens, pencils, notebooks, notebook paper, rulers, glue, binders, lunch boxes, construction paper, markers and folders.

Health care for Floridians was among my major priorities during the session. Though we were able to provide funding for many basic health services during a tough budget year, I am deeply disappointed by cuts to programs for vulnerable residents.

I am thrilled that legislation was approved to crack down on the corrupt “pill mills” operating around the state. Pain clinics, especially in South Florida, attract individuals from all over the country who come to abuse our state’s system. To curb this problem, we worked to increase regulation for pain clinics and for physicians who own or work in such

clinics. Criminal and financial penalties were added to Florida Statute to give law enforcement and prosecutors needed tools to crack down on this growing problem.

Much of this session’s health care discussions, however, focused on some members’ desire to block certain requirements under the new federal health care reform law. To my dismay, a proposed constitutional amendment on this issue will appear on the November ballot.

The topic of women’s reproductive rights surfaced in the final days of the session. I opposed a final version of House Bill 1143, which included two controversial components: a statutory ban on health insurance “mandates” and a provision that requires a woman to undergo and view an ultrasound before having an abortion during the first trimester. I am pleased that Governor Crist vetoed this legislation.

The Legislature also held a series of discussions regarding a major overhaul of Medicaid. The concept was widely criticized by doctors, hospitals and advocates. The Senate did not take up the legislation.



I believe that improving public education is the first step toward creating high-wage jobs and a quality workforce that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy demands. That’s why I had hoped the Legislature would have made greater progress on education reforms and would have invested more in our schools.

I don’t think the state budget approved by the Legislature holds education harmless. It increases the average per-student spending by a one dollar and 22 cents. School officials say their expenses, including insurance, retirement and utilities will be far greater than that increase.

I am particularly disappointed by the Legislature’s decision to pass Senate Bill 6, a measure that drew widespread attention and criticism from across the state. While I feel that there should be a mechanism in place to hold teachers accountable, tying pay to performance is misguided and could have devastating consequences. Thankfully, Governor Crist vetoed this bill, which in my view, would have punished our school teachers and harmed education in our state.

Also this session, Governor Crist signed Senate Bill 4, a bipartisan measure that raises education standards and advances some of the reforms touted this year by many members of the Florida House Democratic Caucus. Senate Bill 4 phases out the high school Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test in math, science and writing, and it introduces end-of-course exams in Algebra 1, Geometry and Biology 1.



# Balancing



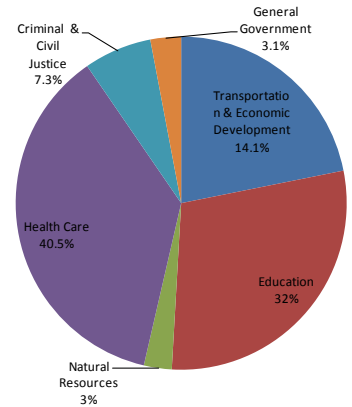
# The Budget

The state budget approved on the final day of the 2010 session includes funding for many important local and statewide projects; but it fails, in my opinion, to meet the needs of Floridians. Therefore, I voted against the \$70.4 billion spending plan, and urged Governor Charlie Crist to veto at least portions of the financial package.

The budget makes college more expensive. And I have said that it makes state roads more crowded, doesn't improve health outcomes for all people, and fails to make job creation the top priority.

Granted, it was a huge challenge this year to write a budget. The Legislature began the session facing a \$3

## FISCAL YEAR 2010-2011



## Appropriations in Millions

Health & Human Services	\$28,482
Education	\$22,514
Transportation & Economic Dev.	\$9,897
Natural Resources	\$2,142
General Government	\$2,227
Criminal & Civil Justice	\$5,113
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$70,375</b>

# Census



The countdown to July 10, the last day to be counted in the 2010 Census, is underway, and state and local officials along with community leaders are working to ensure an accurate count for Florida. Conducted every 10 years, the census guides critical decisions on the national, state and local levels and provides insight into population, state, local and tribal government funding.

With the clock ticking, the Florida House of Representatives is helping to achieve a complete and accurate count through [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov). The website allows Floridians to share information about the census in communities throughout Florida.

Every year, the federal government allocates more than \$400 billion to state, local and tribal governments based on census data. Every additional Floridian counted is worth approximately \$1,500 per year in additional federal funding. Census data also determines congressional representation and guides local decision-makers on where to build new roads, hospitals, childcare and senior citizen centers, schools and more.

billion shortfall. Thankfully, our state was able to rely upon another \$2.3 billion in federal stimulus money approved last year by President Obama and Congress along with another \$270 million in assistance that Congress is expected to approve. A new gaming compact with the Seminole Indian tribe also helps to balance the budget with a projected \$433 million in revenues for the state.

The budget makes cuts to a highly successful program that helps new mothers considered at risk for abusing or neglecting their children. A \$10 million cut to the Healthy Families program amounts to more than a third of its budget. Roughly 3,500 of more than 8,700 families are expected to be dropped from the program.

Healthy Start coalitions, which serve at-risk pregnant women and infants, will see a cut of \$2.6 million. Additionally, contributions to county health departments were cut by \$10.5 million. It's also of serious concern to me that funding for nursing homes and hospitals were cut, including a 7-percent reduction in state payments for the care of indigent patients.

Of importance regarding the state budget, Governor Crist vetoed language that would have prohibited our research institutes, universities and teaching hospitals from conducting embryonic stem cell research if they received state funding. This language would have bound the hands of scientists and researchers. I am glad Florida will continue to be able to conduct life saving research and promote our life sciences within the state.

